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## The State of the Language Reconsidered

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**A**N OCCASIONAL attack against the so-called "liberals" in English usage is perhaps a good thing. And from that point of view Mr. Follett's recent article in the *Atlantic* on "The State of the Language" may serve a worthy purpose. But like most conservatives who are over-jealous of their heritage, the author wears the breeching unduly thin in his scholarly but stubborn resistance to time and change. To be sure, he acknowledges the necessity of "growth"—and then spikes the guns of his critics by forecasting the argument of the "liberalist" that the "distinction between decay and growth" in a language is often more imaginary than real. But in spite of his apparent concessions to the inevitability of change, he presents an unyielding case for the *status quo* in English. And he does it in admirable rhetoric.

To be completely consistent, Mr. Follett will have to go back painstakingly through the decades and reform the language at those points where it has mistakenly and weakly yielded to the pressure of usage against the vigorous but futile protests of those who sensed corruption in every innovation of speech.

But changes in the past, we are told, "brought no confusion, for the new meaning was generally understood before the old one vanished." How did the new meaning come to be understood? Was it radioed to every hamlet and village by the Self-appointed Censors of English Speech as a new form licensed for use and meeting all the specifications of legitimate growth? No, change crept into the language by slow degrees. A new usage satisfied its original perpetrator and continued to satisfy others who imitated him. The tap root of change often strikes deep into the subsoil of error, ignorance, or warped imagination. But the changes have established themselves and are accepted, even by those who deplore them, as legitimate forms and meanings. The forces that have operated in the past are in the main the forces that are operating today and will continue to operate in effecting continuous language changes. No living language can be static. There is no cause for alarm in the fact that modern users of English prefer to define "the Lion's share" as "all but a little" instead of "everything," although philologists will probably agree with Mr. Follett as to the original significance of the expression.

It is a common fault of the traditionalist to condone the past and disparage the present. The fact that the nautical term "knot" may in due time be accepted as a "unit of distance" instead of a "rate per hour" is no reason for despondency. The language gracefully survived the change of meaning (or, if you prefer, the decadence of meaning) of scores of expressions. "Silly," for example, originally meant "good, happy, blessed"; "nice" originally meant "ignorant"; "ambitious," which originally referred to office-seeking, has enlarged its connotations in current usage. The English vocabulary is rich with expressions that have come through the chrysalis of change and have emerged with new wings of meaning. And the phenomenon will continue. Not all the industry of the "purists" can smash the cocoons of language that cling to the luxuriant flora of speech and writing and prevent the metamorphosing of old meanings. It is fortunate indeed that words have a will of their own. Otherwise they would be bottled in the preserving fluid of the first dictionary as lifeless as laboratory specimens. The purists cannot protect the virtue of a language by ordering it to a nunnery. Its virtue lies in mating and multiplying—not in celibacy and sterility.

With Mr. Follett's plea, however, for better teaching of English in the schools, for an unyielding effort in education to transmit a knowledge of the language based upon thoughtful analysis of meaning, I have the greatest sympathy. My objection is that he predicates his plea upon the assumption that all the ills of English usage in the pulpit, in the pool room, in political campaign-speeches, and in public print are due to a complete breakdown in teaching. One might with as much reason assume that the prevalence of error in general practice is traceable to a persistent schoolteacherish insistence on formal drill which is so completely divorced from the

*thought* that should motivate the expression that it has challenged neither the interest nor the respect of the students at whom the instruction is aimed. Yes, we *do* need better teaching, but we need teaching which gets at the root of the intellectual processes—not merely a reiteration of emphasis upon the established conventions of speech and writing.

To say that the teaching of English has "cast off its moorings" and is making no effort to counteract the "erosion of standards" which Mr. Follett believes is taking place in the use of the language is to make a hasty and dangerous deduction on the basis of scanty and superficial evidence. The invasion of a few extreme "liberals" into the professional field of English teaching makes a much bigger splash in the magazine "literature" on the subject than in actual classroom practice. These extreme liberals, like the extreme conservatives, have frequently overstated their position in their enthusiasm for their own point of view. In reality they do not want an abandonment of grammar, but grammar that can be taught and learned "not merely for use but in use." They do not want to chuck language conventions bodily out the window, but to minimize the pedantry of language instruction and cultivate an intelligent tolerance in matters of divided usage.

I know of no progressive-minded educator in the field of English who is not earnestly endeavoring to "revitalize" grammar "as the indispensable science of saying what one wishes to say." But the "pedagogues" who "once taught it as a kind of dismal algebra" are by no means extinct. If there is a decline in the "standards of spoken and written thought" on the part of the present generation of high school graduates, may it not be attributable to the persistence of "arid drill" in the class room (as well as the enormous influx of high school population) rather than to the bodily "flinging-out" of basic

subject-matter which Mr. Follett assumes has taken place? A careful examination of modern textbooks will show an amazing number of pages devoted to the important subject of grammar and its functional application in speech and writing. The fact that these textbooks also devote a considerable amount of space to related English disciplines in an effort to present an integrated program of instruction is not an evidence of breakdown in teaching but an evidence of better understanding of the psychological laws of learning on the part of those who make and administer the curriculum of study.

The solecism which Mr. Follett has cited (one of those which *is*) as a conspicuous example of bad grammar resulting from twisted or careless thinking is one of those which *are* (please note!) commonly used by critics who wish to prove that the English speaking public is illiterate or logically inarticulate. He could have used many others. "Has each person finished *their* work?" is a clear example of sacrificing logical relationships to the general direction of an idea. "They *only* gave us a dollar" is another evidence of indolent thinking and insensitivity to exact meanings. "All the lamps were *not* lighted" is a peculiarly persistent form of misstatement. And so on through a score of other prevalent types of error! But the nation has not necessarily gone soft because congressmen, cub reporters, and college professors occasionally slip up in punctuation, pronunciation, or the parts of speech.

Mr. Follett hits the target center when he says that in the instances of grammatical muddling which he has cited "it is the thinking behind the sentence that is at fault." But no amount of bold-face type in a textbook, no declaiming of definitions, no recitation of rules (even though they be the "simple, precise, concrete facts and principles" which Mr. Follett urges as the first "basic necessity" in the refor-

mation of English teaching) will remedy faulty thinking. The accent of effort in teaching must be primarily upon the thought to be expressed. The grammatical relationships of a sentence are important only because meaning finds more effective expression through them. For that reason in recent years the subject of English has been endowed with a content, a versatile content suited to normal interests and experiences. To interest a student in saying something well, one must first interest him in saying something. A working partnership between principle and practice will never result from the vacuum method of teaching language.

Even when emphasis is fully established where it belongs, on the thinking processes involved in the expression of ideas, perfect results cannot be expected. Unfortunately human intelligence is not proof against error; and the variable factor of ability renders uniformity of accomplishment impossible. Even the protégés of master logicians are occasionally guilty of false reasoning. Success must be judged through a perspective of total results, not through hypercritical concentration on isolated instances of failure. But that improvement can be made and is being made in the motivation of learning, the techniques of instruction, the curriculum of study, and the ultimate attainment of the student is beyond question. And wholesale denunciations breed suspicion rather than confidence.

Yes, the scene is brighter than it has been painted, but no one would contend that the limits of possibility have been realized. What, then, is the direction of future progress? What is the outstanding need in the English course of study or in the instructional procedures employed? It is not a greater abundance of isolated drill, not a more exhaustive study of error, not more grammar in the quantitative sense, not more definitions or principles to memorize, not more red ink on student

# A Correlated Curriculum in Composition and the Social Studies

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VITALIZING the work in composition is a problem constantly confronting the language teacher in the elementary school. One of the most commonly used procedures is that of correlating the composition program with that of the content subjects, where language activities function in situations which are meaningful to children. Social studies and natural science, especially, are rich in possibilities for this type of correlation.

The difficulty of testing the adequacy of such a program is, however, apparent. Such desirable outcomes as an increased interest in composition as a tool necessary to the successful conduct of other school work, a new self-confidence on the part of the child who has something to say or to write, or the added interest in creative writing fostered by the program are difficult to appraise. There remains, however, the possibility of measuring some of the results in terms of standard and informal tests, and evaluating the effectiveness of the correlated program according to available objective standards.

Such an evaluation was worked out in an experiment in the third grade of the University Elementary School in Iowa City, Iowa. During a three year period, from 1931-32 to 1933-34, the work in composition was correlated almost completely with the work in pioneer history, which constitutes the social studies content for the third grade, in an attempt

to discover whether this method of teaching were really effective.

The *Course of Study in Written Composition*,<sup>1</sup> by Maude McBroom is used as the basis of written composition study. Suggestions for oral composition given in the course of study are also closely followed. The teacher in each grade is responsible for selecting those situations which will teach the skills set up for her grade, and reviewing those skills previously taught. During the time of the experiment described below, these situations were found in the study of pioneer history. With a very few exceptions, all the composition work was correlated with this one content subject.

The objectives of the investigation were several: (1) to identify, classify, and record every situation which arose for the teaching of oral and written English; (2) to compile a check on the amount of practice afforded for the specific language skills taught and employed; (3) to record the general teaching procedures and objectives which governed instruction during the time of the experiment; (4) to get an objective measure of the achievement resulting from this program; and (5) to evaluate the program in terms of results achieved. Each of these phases will be treated separately.

The limitations of this investigation may be briefly stated. First, the work was

<sup>1</sup> University of Iowa Monographs in Education. First Series, Number 10. College of Education, 1928.

all carried on by one teacher. Doubtless there are improvements in techniques and results which would have been effected had several teachers been working on the same problem. Second, it is almost impossible to give an adequate picture of the oral composition carried on. Since over half the composition in the third grade is oral, this is unfortunate. Third, the teaching situation in the University Elementary School is rather more favorable than the average. The pupils participating in the experiment were to some extent superior as judged by their intelligence quotients. The median I. Q.'s for the three groups were 119, 112, and 117. The children came from stimulating home and social environments. They had had many experiences, and had been encouraged to express themselves. A wide range of reading materials of pioneer history content was accessible, so that an adequate grasp of content was assured. Lastly, the program throughout the Elementary School is functional, thereby making it easier for the teacher of each succeeding grade to utilize concrete situations for the teaching of composition. The frame of mind with which the children in this study attacked their composition work had been established before this investigation was begun.

Since, however, the results of this experiment are compiled in terms of growth *during the experiment*, the procedure is no doubt validated, and convincing evidence can be presented that the instruction was effective in the third grade.

#### *Language Situations in Pioneer History*

In the following outline, the situations in which pupils actually used and practiced their composition skills in the study of pioneer history are presented. A diversity of both oral and written composition situations is shown. To indicate the wide overlap which occurs in those situations in which either oral or written composition

would be effective, and in which both types were actually used in the period of time covered by the investigation, the asterisk (\*) is used. In written composition, some of the activities were individual, some group. In oral work, all work was, of course, individual.

#### WRITTEN COMPOSITION

##### I. Setting up the problem:

Stating and writing questions to be answered during the studying of the unit. Making a topical outline of subjects for study. Listing items already known about the topic. Writing arguments for a debate. Writing letters to person who might be able to answer questions for the children.

##### II. Trips and excursions:

\*Listing suggestions for behavior on the trip. \*Listing objectives of the trip. \*Summarizing what was learned on the excursion. \*Making suggestions for improvement. Writing letters (asking permission and making arrangements for the trip, explaining to parents the purpose of the excursion, and thanking those who helped make the trip successful).

##### III. Summarizing content of reading:

\*Summarizing information reading on a topic. \*Working out a topical outline for group summaries (oral and written) and individual (oral and written) summaries.

##### IV. Constructive activity:

Listing materials needed to carry on the activity. Listing committees. \*Outlining work of committees. \*Setting up order of procedure. Making a time schedule when needed. Writing letters. \*Listing ways in which the activity might have been improved. Making a list of suggestions as a record for another group of children who might want to carry on a similar activity. Making written summaries of procedure for record. \*Comparison of procedure during the activity with the way the pioneers carried on the same activity. \*Comparison of results with those of the pioneers. Making a financial report of materials bought. Compiling a book containing some or all of these items.

##### V. The assembly:

Making out the program. Writing letters or notes arranging for program, inviting guests, and thanking those who helped. Writing captions, headings, legends, or titles for graphic aids used during the assembly.

**VI. The pioneer history museum:**

Listing articles to be catalogued. Making an outline of the information to be included in the catalogue description of each article. Writing articles. Keeping a catalogue in good form. Writing letters.

**VII. Published reports of work:**

Summarizing interesting projects for school paper. Summarizing projects for local newspaper.

**VIII. Creative work:**

\*Preparing a dramatization, using factual material as a basis. Writing pioneer stories. Writing individual and group poems. Writing original stories to explain pictures. Writing letters to imaginary correspondents. Keeping an imaginary diary of pioneer events.

**IX. Lectures, movies, slides, demonstrations, and other special learning occasions:**

\*Making arrangements for above. \*Expressing gratitude for learning opportunities afforded, for example, by lectures. \*Summarizing what was learned.

**X. The bulletin board:**

Writing titles for material posted. Writing descriptive material to accompany exhibits.

**XI. Social communication:**

\*Telling classmates who have been absent what has been studied. \*Making a booklet to give as a gift record of an activity, excursion, or unit of study.

**ORAL COMPOSITION****I. Setting up the problem:**

Asking questions of pioneers, or about pioneers. Asking questions about articles or pictures. Contributing information already known about the topic. \*Offering evidence in support of, or in opposition to, a challenging statement, such as, "The pioneers were healthier than we are." Offering suggestions for possible procedure in the solution of problems set up. Discussion of possible sources of information. Making arrangements for a speaker, a display of slides, or other outside help.

**II. Trips or excursions:**

Making arrangements for the excursion. Discussion of the results of the excursion (individual and committee reports and class discussions). Evaluating the excursion. Thanking those who made the excursion possible.

**III. Summarizing materials read:**

Individual or committee reports. Socialized recitations. Debating informally questions which arise. Answering completely and carefully every question raised when the problem

was set up. Special reports from books not accessible to all the class, or too difficult for the class as a whole to read.

**IV. The activity:**

Discussing materials needed to carry on an activity, e.g., make soap. Discussing committees—their organization and responsibilities. Reviewing committee duties by chairman of group. Discussing order of procedure. Making arrangements with people who might be involved. Serving as committee chairman (directing discussion, assigning duties, checking up achievement, reporting to the class).

\*Explaining processes employed in the activity. Giving and accepting criticism of procedures. Displaying and explaining the results of an activity. Listing ways in which the activity might have been improved. Evaluating the activity. Discussing record. Thanking those concerned.

**V. The assembly:**

Planning (discussing order of program, trying out for talks, planning invitations). Getting ready for the assembly (arranging for place, programs, properties, extending invitations). Putting on the program (serving as announcer, giving informational talks, answering questions, greeting guests).

**VI. The school museum:**

Discussing the value of cataloguing articles. Discussing catalogue descriptions. Asking information about articles. Arranging for loans. Thanking people for loans. Welcoming guests and explaining museum articles to them. Planning and arranging for display of articles. Giving individual reports on museum articles.

**VII. Published reports of work:**

Discussion of types of information which would be interesting for a paper. Conferring with reporters on papers. Informal summarizing of articles before writing.

**VIII. Creative work:**

Informal dramatization of pioneer activities and experiences, based on factual material read. Telling pioneer stories. Making up pioneer poems. Telling stories suggested by pioneer pictures. Making up new stanzas to pioneer play-party games.

**IX. The bulletin board:**

Planning the arrangement. Making proper captions for material posted. Planning the organization of subject matter.

**X. Social communication:**

Telling classmates who have been absent about the work in pioneer history. Answering questions or volunteering information to guests.

### *Language Skills Employed in Pioneer History*

The check on composition skills was rather necessarily limited to the written composition skills. Each skill reviewed or presented for mastery in the grade, or taught incidentally as need arose, was listed and a record kept of its occurrence. For example, a record of the occurrences of the use of the period at the end of the sentence, a skill assigned to first grade in the course of study, showed that this skill was practiced over sixty times in one year in pioneer history work. Comma in a series, a third grade skill, was introduced and practiced at least twelve times in one year in pioneer history. The use of the hyphen, a fourth grade skill, was mastered early because of the number of situations calling for this usage. It was also necessary to teach the use of the colon in setting off a list, although this skill is assigned to fifth grade, since eleven situations arose where this skill was needed.

The complete chart, which cannot be reproduced here, shows conclusively that a correlated program of this kind affords ample opportunity for the initial instruction in all skills assigned for mastery to third grade, adequate practice on forms previously presented, and incidental teaching of several skills ordinarily taught in later grades.

### *General Teaching Procedures and Objectives*

In the teaching of composition, there are several aims and objectives in the mind of the teacher, and several plans consistently followed in the achievement of these objectives, which are not so easily defined as the skills to be attained by grades. These may not even find expression in the daily plans of the teacher, because of the broadness of their scope, and because they are long-term objectives in the field of composition as a whole. They are, however, of vital importance in the determina-

tion of the uses of more detailed devices of teaching. For this reason, space is given here to list the general teaching procedures and objectives which governed the entire instructional program in composition during the three-year experimental period. They are based on analyses of actual practices followed, and not merely recommendations. Complete attainment of any one of these objectives was, of course, an impossibility; yet constant striving toward these goals was doubtless an influential factor in determining the teaching and learning during the experimental period. The general practices of the teacher are given below.

#### WRITTEN COMPOSITION

- I. In the administration of written composition
  - A. Providing many opportunities for written work
  - B. Providing for practice in many types of written work, such as summaries, letters, lists, suggestions, or outlines
  - C. Making every writing situation functional to the child, for example:
    1. Writing letters for information needed
    2. Cataloguing articles for museum
  - D. Planning diversified assignments allowing for:
    1. Encouragement of the individual child
    2. Correctness in detail of the finished product, since no child was expected to work beyond his ability, but was expected to do well what he did do
- II. In developing a feeling for correctness in all written work
  - A. Calling frequent attention to models of form, correctness, and style, either in children's own work, or in materials read
  - B. Posting only correct papers
  - C. Calling attention to points of correctness when copying group-dictated compositions on the blackboard
- III. In making it possible to achieve correctness
  - A. Checking on grasp of content before writing by:
    1. Giving children opportunities to express themselves orally before writing
    2. Discussing ideas involved
    3. Checking up on vocabulary to be used
  - B. Emphasizing the value of self-correction of papers by:
    1. Reading compositions aloud before handing them in

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- 2. Checking against a definite set of standards, preferably set up by the children themselves, on matters of form and correctness
  - C. Frequent teacher check of achievement by:
    - 1. Diagnosis of individual and class achievement in order to isolate difficulties for drill
    - 2. Use of informal tests
    - 3. Use of formal tests
  - D. Use of drill materials growing out of children's own work
  - IV. In developing a consciousness of style and rhetorical ability
    - A. Emphasis on organization before any type of writing by:
      - 1. "Planning" stories
      - 2. Outlining before writing
    - B. Definite planned procedures to develop vocabulary
    - C. Practice in variation of sentences by:
      - 1. Re-writing sentences in as many ways as possible
      - 2. Choosing most interesting ways to tell things
    - D. Emphasis of importance of good beginning and ending sentences
    - E. Identifying and working to eliminate those errors of diction found common to the group
  - V. In developing in an elementary way an appreciation of the ethics of writing
    - A. A development of the recognition of plagiarism in writing, and working to eliminate it; discouraging copying from books
    - B. Development of the recognition of responsibility for truthfulness of statements made
    - C. Developing a feeling of the undesirability of dogmatic statement by:
      - 1. Asking for proof of statements
      - 2. Giving children opportunities to discriminate between statements on the same topic, picking out the more desirable or truthful statement, as:
        - a. "Pioneers didn't have as much fun as we do."
        - b. "Pioneers didn't enjoy themselves in the same ways we do."
- ORAL COMPOSITION**
- I. In the administration of oral composition
    - A. Providing for many opportunities for oral composition
      - 1. In class discussions
      - 2. In assemblies
      - 3. In opening exercises
      - 4. In reports
    - B. Using oral composition in all situations where it is as effective as written
    - C. Insistence of participation of every pupil in group work
  - II. Developing a feeling of appreciation of correctness in oral work
    - A. Calling attention to well-planned, well-delivered contributions in oral composition
    - B. Trying out for assembly talks, and selecting superior speakers
  - III. In making it possible to achieve correctness in oral work
    - A. Insistence upon correct grammar and usage forms, and drill for the elimination of errors through:
      - 1. Correction as errors occur
      - 2. Planned drill, growing out of analysis of children's oral composition
    - B. Re-working of oral compositions until correct and interesting
  - IV. Developing style and rhetorical ability
    - A. Emphasis on careful thinking before and during speaking
    - B. Emphasis on planning, and the use of good beginning and ending sentences
    - C. Special drill to eliminate errors of speech, such as, "A corn-cracker was when the pioneers didn't grind their corn up fine."
    - D. Development of the critical ability to decide what is meant by a question, and to answer it directly; and by teacher refusal to accept an answer poorly or inaccurately stated
  - V. In developing an appreciation for the courtesies of speech
    - A. Emphasizing the importance of a pleasing voice
    - B. Working to eliminate the courtesy of interrupting
    - C. Developing a feeling of individual responsibility for success of group discussions
    - D. Working to eliminate repetitions of contributions made by others in the group
    - E. Making use of all opportunities which arise where children are called upon to explain to other children, to parents, or to guests, information requested
    - F. Emphasis on habits of correct pronunciation and enunciation by means of drill

*Results of the Correlated Program as Shown in Language Growth*

One interpretation of the results of language teaching was made on the basis of the Seaton-Pressey Language Tests. The test results were very similar each

year of the experiment. Those for the year 1933-1934 are typical, and will be presented. For purposes of comparative study, the children were grouped according to their ability as revealed by fall tests. The H group consisted of those above standard for their grade in the fall, the M group consisted of those at or about at standard, and the L group was made up of those below standard. The scores in the table below are expressed in terms of growth in years and months on each division of the test. Parenthetical figures indicate the number of pupils.

TABLE I  
Seaton-Pressey Language Test, 1933-34

	Capitalization	Usage	Punctuation	Sentence Sense
H group	1.1(12)	.16(21)	.68(9)	.2(6)
M group	2.15(13)	1.0(5)	1.68(15)	1.9(9)
L group	2.3(5)	.7(4)	2.3(6)	2.3(15)
Average Gain	1.8(30)	.9(30)	2.0(30)	1.3(30)
Grade Placement in Spring	6.0	5.1	6.0	5.8

The table shows several interesting facts. For example, in every test, the highest group shows the least improvement. This is partly due to the fact that high fall scores made it possible to show only little growth. If growth were computed in percentage of possible growth, the H group equalled or exceeded other groups. The fact that individuals making high scores in the fall were given less instructional attention during the year is also significant.

In every test for three years, the lowest group made the most improvement. This is due partly to the fact that there was more scope for improvement, and to the fact that these children were given more individual and remedial help which their scores indicated they needed.

The average scores for each of the four tests for each year showed the class to be at or above fifth grade standard. This is partly accounted for by the number of children above standard in the fall. High

test scores in the fall would seem to have little bearing on the improvement of composition through correlated composition in the third grade. On the contrary, these high scores substantiate and validate the general method of teaching set up in this thesis, since pre-third grade composition work in University Elementary School is carried on in much the same way as the work described in third grade.

An analysis of individual scores of thirty pupils taking the tests in the year 1933-1934 shows a gratifying number of pupils making gains of two or more years during one year's study of composition. Out of a total of 120 scores, 47 showed gains of two or more years.

On the whole, the results of the Seaton-Pressey Tests over the experimental period would indicate a more than satisfactory attainment in the skills tested. This is no proof that the correlated method of instruction is responsible for the growth; but it certainly indicates that growth in isolated language skills need not suffer when taught through correlation with content subjects.

In addition to the formal language tests given, each group was tested both fall and spring by informal sentence and letter tests set up by Miss McBroom, and described in her course of study.<sup>2</sup> No standards are available for these tests, but an analysis of raw scores gives evidence of growth.

A score of 37 points is possible on the sentence test. Tentative standards compiled from second grade scores would set the third grade expected achievement at about 30. The average class gains for the three years were 4.1, 4.4, and 6.4, respectively.

One child each year failed to reach standard by the end of third grade. The first of these pupils made a gain of 9 points, or 4.9 above the average class gain for that year; the second made a gain of

<sup>2</sup> *Op. cit.*

8 points, or 3.6 above the class average for the second year; and the third made a gain of 21 points, or 13.6 above the class average for the third year. On the whole, the results of the sentence tests were satisfactory.

An examination of the scores on the informal letter test shows similar gains. The scores were recorded in terms of errors, and growth, in terms of errors eliminated. The grouping of pupils was arbitrary, but reveals the general tendency. Again 1933-1934 is taken as a typical year.

TABLE II  
*Informal Letter Test, 1933-34*

	Errors—fall test	Growth
H group	6-10	.67 ( 8 pupils)
M group	12-18	11.1 ( 9 pupils)
L group	19-55	27.5 (11 pupils)
Average class gain		14.2 (28 pupils)

With the numerous possibilities for error in the complicated skills involved in writing even a simple friendly letter, the attainment of perfection is difficult for a third grade child even at the end of the year. An examination of individual scores in terms of growth shows high achievement in letter writing for certain pupils. 16 of 28 pupils made gains of ten or more points; 7 of 28 pupils eliminated 20 or more errors; 10 of 28 pupils made 3 or fewer errors on their final letters. Viewed subjectively, these letters seem to be as free from error as could be expected from third grade children.

#### *Summary and Conclusions*

In the light of the evidence presented above, the following conclusions concerning correlated language and pioneer history in the third grade seem warranted:

1. The variety of learning situations in connection with the study of pioneer history provides opportunities for instruction in, and practice of, many types of oral and written composition.

2. These learning situations provide opportunity for the maintenance of skills in written composition taught previous to third grade; for the presentation and practice of those skills listed as third grade objectives; and even make imperative the teaching of some of the skills listed for higher grades in a well-organized, graded course of study in composition.

3. The organization of the composition activities of the grade around a content course of study evidently is accompanied by an emphasis on, rather than a neglect of, definite, identifiable skills measured by standard and informal tests. The growth shown by each of the three classes in the skills tested is an indication that in addition to the interesting, varied composition experiences afforded by the correlated teaching, the children on the whole, were able to make more than average gains on formal language skills.

4. Only a few of the possibilities for correlated composition are outlined in this thesis. Subjects other than pioneer history would undoubtedly afford as many, or perhaps more, opportunities for the teaching of composition in situations which will be meaningful to the child. There is little reason to conclude that the validity of the method described is determined by the subject matter used. There is much reason to believe that the gains made by the children during the period of investigation were due to the practice of specific composition skills in situations which possessed purpose and meaning for the child, so that a knowledge of correct practice became a real essential to him.

5. Judged in terms of the amount and quality of written work done by the children, and by objective evidences of growth, the correlated study of language and pioneer history was highly effective, even when measured in terms of formal language outcomes.

# The Fetish of English Grammar

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A history of English grammar in the United States would afford some amusement if a rational mind could derive any amusement from perusing a record of abortive attempts to teach the correct use of language by every means but actual practice in the art of speaking and writing it.

—Wallis (W. B. Fowle) 1850

**A**S THE world increases in complexity, and knowledge is spread with greater ease and rapidity, it becomes more and more necessary to readjust our ideas of educational curricula. What children know instinctively, and the things they need to know in order to live happily with their fellows are quite different now from what they were in the nineteenth century. The difference lies in what is considered fundamental when all prejudices of social and religious upbringing are swept away. When a child is unquestioning, a teacher or parent, unless he is astute, is generally blinded by these prejudices, and harks back instinctively to these older concepts. A child must have Latin because it is harmless and somewhat disciplinary, and because it was part of the training of some exemplary individual who would probably have been just as fine a man without Caesar and Cicero. English grammar has always been taught and, therefore, with a fine disregard of logic it must continue to be so.

Fortunately, there are in the world children who are not satisfied to be told, but who ask questions which sometimes penetrate very deeply; and equally fortunately there are those older people who do not only listen to them but answer them. The result to date has been the production of books on social science as an alternative

to the cut and dried history and geography texts of a generation ago; the elimination of Latin as an absolute requirement in many colleges and preparatory schools; the paring down of the items in formal English grammar; the introduction of dancing, singing, handwork, current events, student government. The Secondary Education and College Board examinations are being set with a more sympathetic eye for this new concept of fundamentals. This is all most satisfactory, but the end is not yet.

The Romans considered grammar as the foremost of the liberal arts. They spoke a highly inflected language, and it was quite natural that they should consider the mastery of it as an essential ingredient in a full education. The names of Dionysius Thrax whose work, *Ars Grammatica*, was the standard text before the Christian era, and Donatus and Priscian in the fourth century A.D. stand as the originators of the study of grammar, and their rules and methods, especially those of Priscian, were used and required as late as the year 1250. When, during the later middle ages, under the influence of Chaucer, the vernacular came into its own, men still clung to the methods of the Latin grammarians. They felt the need of adjusting the science of Latin construction to the new language. It had to be a transition. The idea of a frank change never appears to have occurred to them. It is instinctive to hold

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onto traditions, and the tradition of Latin seems to have been held in a death grip by the grammarians of the middle ages.

Before the time of Chaucer there was, to be sure, some reason for following the older methods. Oral communication in England was held in three languages, Latin, Anglo-Saxon, and Norman French, and two thirds of these were highly inflected. Latin was used by the Church and appeared in a good deal of lay prose, and when we remember how great was the ecclesiastical power at the time we can well understand the hold it had on men's minds. Anglo-Saxon, originally an inflected language, was used by the common people who scorned the affectations of Norman-French. Even before Chaucer welded the three languages into what we may broadly call modern English, Latin words were adopted without any inflectional distinctions, and the old inflections of the Anglo-Saxon speech were gradually dropped.

We are safe in saying that at the time of Chaucer, English ceased to be a language in which the mechanics predominated. Anyone who has read the *Canterbury Tales* will realize that the difficulties lie, not in the actual understanding, but in the pronunciation and spelling. English spelling has not yet set, and in the fifteenth century it was in a very fluid state. But this is not grammar. The thought to be conveyed is the all important thing, and Chaucer spoke clearly and unmistakably. The faults were the growing pains of a beautiful language and not those of a man ignorant of the rules of grammar. Here was the moment for the break from the study of inflectional peculiarities, and yet almost two hundred years after the death of Chaucer we find the little boy Shakespeare studying Lily's *Latin Grammar*. His opinion of this sort of thing is succinctly expressed in the words of Mistress Page in *The Merry Wives of Windsor* when she says, "Sir Hugh, my husband, says my

son profits nothing in the world at his book."

With the Reformation and the translation of the Bible into the vernacular, the influence of Latin visibly declined, but the tradition of grammar died hard, and its death was in no way hastened by the cold, pedantic literary formulas of the Restoration writers. John Locke is credited with being one of the pioneers in encouraging the study of the mother tongue in place of Latin, but unfortunately, the spirit of the age interpreted this study as grammar. The author of *The Conduct of the Understanding* could hardly think otherwise. He says, ". . . it will be a matter of wonder why young gentlemen are forced to learn the grammar of foreign and dead languages, and are never once told the grammar of their own."

With this pronouncement ringing in their ears, our forefathers established the American colonies, and a school system. By the middle of the eighteenth century the study of English grammar was in full swing in American schools. A survey shows that it was added to the curricula of private schools as a very special inducement. Its disciplinary features appealed to the Puritan spirit, and its descent from Latin suggested an ecclesiastical origin. The contemporary text-book definition of grammar as "the art of speaking and writing the English language correctly" seemed to give no thought to the possibility of speaking and writing it beautifully and fluently. The method of instruction also followed the Latin tradition, and children were compelled to memorize long rules which were repeated daily under threat of punishment. It seemed to be assumed that a knowledge of the mechanics of the language would make a boy speak "nicely" which was the word used. There is no proof that this theory succeeded in practice. It certainly did not produce any very great literature, and there is no tangible evidence that

(Continued on page 100)

# Recent Language Textbooks

## A Study of Six Sixth-Grade Texts

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THE FIRST<sup>1</sup> of the two articles presenting the results of analyzing several recent language-composition textbooks was concerned with the page-space assigned the various phases of English teaching. This second article is devoted to a study of the so-called progressive tendencies that the authors of these books have emphasized.

The techniques involved in determining mentions of progressive tendencies and the definitions of terms are the same as were employed in an earlier study made in 1929.<sup>2</sup> The definitions of the four types of emphasis are:

Type 1—A bare mention

Type 2—Explicit directions

Type 3—Guidance based on a model

Type 4—Guidance leading to independent planning, execution, appraisal, and revision by pupils.

The earlier study utilized trends that are summarized in the *Fifth Yearbook of the Department of Superintendence*<sup>3</sup> as the basis of analysis. These have been retained in the present study, except that "minimum of reproduction" has been omitted. As long as the earlier books were at the seventh grade level, the functions of the junior high school were used as supplementary bases of analysis.<sup>4</sup> The recent books being sixth grade level, junior high school functions have not been considered appropriate and Johnson's statement of significant tendencies characteristic of the progressive viewpoint in Eng-

lish instruction<sup>5</sup> have been substituted. The pertinent ones of these are quoted below.

1. Cumulative standards: "Standards should be few but consistently carried forward."
2. Functional centers: "The language activities must be either directly or indirectly functional from a social standpoint."
3. Correlation of reading and expressing: "Reading and writing should be correlated in such a way as to emphasize the common thought functions involved."
4. Enrichment for superior pupils: "A certain amount of differentiation of instruction may be cared for by a liberal suggestion of a variety of pupil activities, numerous individual and group enterprises, supplementary reading, etc."
5. Summary tests: "Summary tests of a very definite character should conclude each unit of instructional material (a) in the social content included and (b) in the language practices which have been recommended."
6. Socialized procedure: "So far as possible the methods of instruction that are suggested should be adaptable to socialized procedure."
7. Use of the model: "Appropriate models should be introduced at frequent intervals."

Table I presents the results of analyz-

<sup>1</sup> THE ELEMENTARY ENGLISH REVIEW, March, 1936.

<sup>2</sup> THE ELEMENTARY ENGLISH REVIEW, February, 1929.

<sup>3</sup> Fifth Yearbook, pages 88-89.

<sup>4</sup> Koos, L. V. *The Junior High School*, pages 82-83.

<sup>5</sup> Johnson, Roy, Ivan, "The Old and the New in English Instruction," THE ELEMENTARY ENGLISH REVIEW, VII (Jan., 1930), 11-15.

TABLE I  
TYPES OF EMPHASIS GIVEN TO MENTIONS OF PROGRESSIVE TENDENCIES IN ENGLISH INSTRUCTION  
*In Six Sixth Grade Textbooks Published Since 1929*

ing the six recent books for their emphasis on progressive tendencies. The three traditional separate-lesson books are placed first and the progressive unit-organization books last. The reader can study the table to determine the number of times any said progressive tendency is featured in one or all of the books, which progressive tendencies are most or least emphasized, and what type of emphasis is accorded to the trends. Because of lack of space the total frequencies of mention for specific trends are not given, but subsequent discussion will present the salient facts revealed by the determination of these totals.

An inspection of the totals at the base of Table I reveals an almost staggering number of mentions of progressive tendencies in the six recent books, there being about five thousand in all. The reader must keep in mind that a single expressional activity may be progressive in more than one respect, so that the books with the largest number of mentions reflect the skill of their authors in suggesting activities that are diversified in their progressiveness. Thus, writing a geographical description to be published in a class magazine was tabulated as emphasizing the following trends: d, e, g, h, i, n, p, q, r, and u of the fourth type of emphasis.<sup>6</sup>

#### *General emphasis in progressive tendencies*

So far as frequency of use is a measure of emphasis in treatment the following facts are revealed by a study of Table I. All six books rather consistently emphasize the progressive trends of utilizing functional centers<sup>7</sup> and a few standards consistently carried forward, of giving particular attention to written mechanics, of using socialized procedures—particu-

larly in the way of class appraisal of written compositions, of selecting topics based on actual life experience of pupils, and of presenting models as a means of clarifying standards and improving the quality of compositions. With the exception of one or two of the books, the following progressive tendencies are strongly emphasized: "correlation of reading and expression," "elaborate technic for written composition," and "audience situation: publishing." Three of the books stress the "extension and mastery of vocabulary," one of them probably to an exaggerated degree.

What recent books fail to stress is fully as important in determining their effectiveness as teaching agencies as is what they emphasize most. In these six books, practically no attention is given to "individual and basic spelling lists." It may well be that language class is no time for teaching spelling, but nevertheless it would seem that textbooks should provide for motivating accurate spelling and for recording the correct forms of troublesome words in order that these might be studied at some separate period. The notoriously poor spelling of modern young folk may be in large part due to the fact that spelling is taught as an entirely separate subject, not an applied one.

Five of the recent books fail to provide for enriching the program of superior pupils. This is a serious indictment at a time when progressive teachers and administrators are stressing the adaptation of school procedures and materials to individual differences. A third neglected item is "grammar—an aid to expression." Of course, we are not agreed on the amount of grammar to be taught below junior high school and, if these textbooks include little grammar, the infrequency of mention of functional grammar may be of little significance. But these books do apportion considerable space to "parts of speech" and "sentence analysis" as re-

<sup>6</sup> For significance of letters, see Table I where each progressive tendency is labeled with a letter of the alphabet.

<sup>7</sup> Two of the traditional type of books concentrate on story-telling and letter-writing and almost entirely omit other functional centers.

vealed in the first of these articles where it was shown that four of the six books respectively devote 12.3, 16.0, 18.9, and 22.8 per cent of their space to these two items. This technical grammar, so much of which is not directly related to improving existing deficiencies in expression, would seem to have little place in the sixth grade curriculum.<sup>8</sup> Some of the books suggest few, if any, projects and only one book provides for very many. However, some of the projects are rich in expressional opportunities and supposedly run throughout the year. Hence, recent books seem fairly adequate in this respect.

A review of the items most and least emphasized indicates that recent books are socializing agencies in that they stress functional centers, socialized procedures, life experiences, and the audience situation. Also they emphasize thoroughness and absolute mastery of skills: cumulative standards, repeated practice on written mechanics, models, elaborate technics in written composition, and mastery of vocabulary. Two mechanical features are not functionalized as much as they should be; namely, grammar and spelling. The chief deficiency, however, may be the neglect of an enriched program for superior pupils.

#### *Types of emphasis accorded progressive tendencies*

Like the books analyzed in 1925, the recent books have most of their mentions accorded to Types 2 and 4; that is, pupils are usually given either specific directions for carrying out an expressional activity or an assignment for self-direction and self-appraisal. The newest books have very little of Type 1, bare mention (in which the pupil does not have to apply the suggestion, but merely reads about it in the abstract). Books published between

<sup>8</sup> The three progressive unit-organization books functionalize grammar by using it as a means of introducing variety in vocabulary and sentence structure.

1920 and 1924 gave bare mention in 14 to 22 per cent of the cases, whereas recent books have only 1.2 to 10.2 per cent of their mentions given to Type 1. The textbooks of several years ago, in no instance, had more mentions of Type 4 (self-appraisal) than of Type 2 (specific directions). In three out of six of the most recent books, the percentage of mentions of Type 4 exceeds mentions of Type 2. Progressive tendencies are clarified by the use of models (Type 3) more frequently in the most recent books than in 1929, the average percentage of newer books being 11.9 against 4 for the older books. Evidently there is a tendency to increase the use of models and to encourage more self-direction and self-appraisal on the part of the pupils.

#### *Traditional vs. unit-organization books*

It may be interesting to compare the treatment of progressive tendencies in the three traditional books and in the three books centering about units in the social studies, natural science, or literature. In general, the unit-organization books have many more mentions than do the traditional type of books. It may be that the organization of language textbooks by units encourages the featuring of progressive tendencies, or it may be that the authors of these books were saturated with progressive ideas and that the unit-organization is an incidental concomitant progressive feature.

In order to determine objectively whether the traditional type of book differs from the unit-organization type in the identity of the progressive tendencies most strongly emphasized, the total frequency of mention in the three traditional and the three unit-organization books was separately determined for each progressive trend. Table II shows in decreasing order of frequency for all the books, the figures indicating the rank-order for the tendency in each type of book.

TABLE II  
RANKING BASED ON COMBINED FREQUENCY OF  
TYPES OF EMPHASIS 2, 3, AND 4

	Traditional	Unit-type
Functional centers	1	1
Cumulative standards	8	2
Emphasis on written mechanics	6	3
Socialized procedures	4.5	6
Mastery of vocabulary	2	9
Topics from real life	3	10
Supplementary reading	9	4.5
Models	4.5	8
Elaborate technic—written composition	7	7
Audience situation	13	4.5

It is evident that there is considerable difference in the relative degree to which the two types of books give emphasis to particular progressive tendencies. Both types emphasize functional centers above all else, but—as has been stated previously—the traditional type of book concentrates on story-telling and letter-writing, while the unit-organization books have a more diversified program which, in addition, includes reports, conversation, discussion, dramatization, explanations, and memoranda. Both types also agree on giving considerable attention to an elaborate technic for written composition. In other respects, there is considerable divergence in relative emphasis. The ranks for "socialized procedures" and "use of models" are somewhat lower for the unit-organization books, though a study of Table I reveals that these books are equal or even superior in absolute frequency of mention for these two tendencies. In regard to "extension and mastery of vocabulary" and "utilization of life experiences," the unit-organization books have a very much lower rank. Actually, they are superior in respect to vocabulary, because one of the traditional books so exaggerates this phase that the mentions of "extension and mastery of vocabulary" are unduly weighted. The other two traditional type books give almost no at-

tention to vocabulary. In regard to the use of life experiences as topics for composition, the unit-organization books show a decided tendency to substitute materials gained through reading for those derived from actual life situations. This shows that the unit-organization books will contribute to an enriched background. However, there may be some danger in depending too much on reading for information, instead of on personal experiences, as a source of topics in composition. If fluency and accuracy do go together as experimental evidence seems to indicate, then duller pupils may do better if allowed to do much of their oral and written expression in connection with their own life-activities. Certainly they need an enriched background, but nevertheless expression may become laborious if too much of it is tied up to reading. Possibly here is a place for differentiation in accordance with individual abilities and interests. Brighter pupils may bear many of the heaviest responsibilities in doing supplementary reading and research.

Surprisingly enough, the unit-organization books give more emphasis to written mechanics than do the traditional. Evidently the authors of the former type of books realize the danger that teachers may neglect the mechanical phases of language if their attention is centered in the carrying through of units based on content subjects. This same care for getting results in improving expression while dealing with units is shown by the very high rank of "cumulative standards" in the unit-organization books. A careful inspection of these books shows the care with which the authors set up standards and refer to them in connection with practically every expressional activity. The decidedly higher rank for "audience situations" in the unit-type books is to be expected.

In regard to the less frequently mentioned tendencies, the following compari-

sions seem significant. The unit-type books have more of "independent oral composition." It would seem that much of the motivation for written composition would be gone if the composition were given orally first. Yet two of the traditional type of books have almost every composition written after it has been told. Such procedure would seem advisable only when training for a specific skill is intended, the pupils being desirous of meeting a "felt need" for this skill. The unit-organization books also do more to draw "topics from other subjects." This ties up with their tendency to correlate reading and expression.

"Adaptation to individual differences" and "summary tests" have a considerably lower ranking in the unit-organization books than in the traditional type of books. These are serious deficiencies. Phases to which both types of books give a low ranking are "individual and basic spelling lists," "functional grammar," "projects," "use of extra-curricular activities," and "enrichment for superior pupils."

#### *Arrangement of materials within the books*

Several of the authors have made interesting departures in the arrangement of the types of material contained in the books. Supplementary exercises in correct usage and the mechanics of written composition are placed in the appendix of one book so as to accommodate pupils who need more practice on certain items. A language-composition scale for use by teacher and pupils is appended in one case. Still another use for the appendix is the suggestion of enriching projects and holiday activities. Several of the books put supplementary exercises at the end of each chapter.

One unusual arrangement is the use of exercises on correct usage and on the mechanics of written composition as "fill-

ers" on the pages where assignments for composition have not used all the space. Just how teachers will use such materials is uncertain. Teachers who take careful inventory and have each pupil practice only those phases which he needs will find a wealth of material in these exercises. There may be some danger of the exercises' being used in a discrete, non-functional manner.

One apparently commendable departure is the one in which the book is divided into two parts, the first devoted to expressional activities and the second to related explanations, setting up of standards, and guides for organizing and appraising compositions. A thorough inventory of mechanics and correct usage is presented at the end of each unit in the first part of the book, supplementary practice exercises being presented in the second. Teachers should find the second half of this book helpful in directing expressional activities that arise in other subjects. On the other hand, there may be danger that the pupils might not make sufficient use of the guide-section while planning their expressional activities.

#### *Summary*

The recent textbooks should be really functional in their results, first because of their use of natural situations where pupils are likely to be spontaneous and second, because of the repetitive nature of the contents. The use of the various functional centers, socialized procedures and audience situations is particularly evident in the progressive unit-organized books. These also emphasize cumulative standards and practice on written mechanics. There is some trend away from topics based on life experiences to those based on reading materials in the social studies, natural sciences or literature.

The neglect of spelling and opportunities for enriching the program for su-

perior pupils, the non-functional nature of most of the grammar, and the failure to make systematic inventory of expressional needs are serious deficiencies. Teachers will, in most instances, need to supplement the textbooks.

Curriculum-makers are still in a quandary as to what materials to include, what progressive tendencies to emphasize, and how to care for individual needs and local interests. Studies of grade-placement are

greatly needed. Writers of textbooks tend to follow their own inclinations and hobbies in determining what materials to include and emphasize in organizing their books. Possibly integrated studies sponsored by The National Conference on Research in Elementary School English may help to objectify the choice of materials and procedures to be included in language-composition textbooks at the various grade-levels.

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### THE STATE OF THE LANGUAGE RECONSIDERED

(Continued from page 79)

themes. It is a more effective co-ordination of the *use of the mental processes* in handling ideas with the *use of language* in expressing ideas. Other legitimate needs might be mentioned, but let us concentrate for a moment on the need of relating the disciplines of language to the disciplines of thought. A recognition of differences, a recognition of similarities, thinking in terms of like and unlike, putting ideas together into new patterns, a recognition of relationships, the detection of irrelevancies, making generalizations, recognizing concrete illustrations of general principles, setting up alternatives of action, making judgments on the basis of comparative values, recognizing the relation of cause and effect—one or all of these mental processes may be involved in a communicational experience. It is the obligation of the English teacher, particularly in composition and grammar, to relate these processes to the subject-matter in such a way as to make them recognizable, and to utilize them in such a way as to promote the habit of rational analysis in every expressional situation. From this point of view the inductive approach to a lesson in grammar takes on a double value, and the analysis of a sentence-thought or a paragraph-thought becomes

an exercise in the logical use of the mental processes rather than the teacher's hunting ground of error. The emphasis becomes positive rather than negative, reasonable rather than arbitrary.

In one respect, then, most progressive English teachers will find themselves in agreement with Mr. Follett: namely, in his contention that the mastery of clear, forceful, and correct English depends upon an analysis of "the thinking behind the sentence." But with his belief that modern English is in an unprecedented state of decay they will take issue. And the sweeping disparagement of the earnest efforts of English teachers everywhere to implant a love for cogent and effective expression they will look upon as an unfortunate indictment founded upon a misunderstanding of the educational problems involved. Again let me say that an occasional vigorous presentation of an ultra-conservative point of view is an excellent tonic to our thought—although it may be prompted by excessive anxiety rather than a comprehensive and objective consideration of actual facts and conditions. It reveals certain angles of reactionary opinion that must be conciliated before progressive measures in education can move forward unimpeded.

# Teaching Good Usage in the Kindergarten

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THE CHIEF work of the child in the first grade is learning to read. The facility with which a child learns to read depends, of course, upon his power of attention, concentration, effort, and the ear and eye training which he has had. It also depends upon his language background. In this case language background means the amount and kind of literature and conversation that the child has heard, and the kinds of grammar and pronunciation with which he has been in contact.

The kindergartner can give these matters more consideration. She has given her classes sufficient literature, of course, and in this way has enlarged their vocabulary; but she has not memorized this literature. Each telling is worded differently. Careful, persistent and exact repetition of phrases and sentences is necessary if the child is to make them his own.

If a child makes a mistake in grammar or pronunciation, the kindergartner goes no farther than saying the thing correctly and having the child repeat it. The eye training is well done, but the ear training could be done better, if it were done more consciously. The kindergartner must become aware of the effect upon the ear of constant repetition of certain forms. This is the way that the speech of the child is molded. The correct forms must be used under conditions that strongly appeal. In order to leave an impression on the memory, there must be frequent oral repetition at close intervals. By utilizing the game spirit we may hope to present the correct

form in such a way that it will become habitual, and thus we shall be able to develop language consciousness.

At the beginning of the school year the kindergartner will notice the speech weaknesses of her group. She will decide which errors are important to correct. She will discard those that will be corrected without special emphasis and those that are common to only one or two children in the class.

Following is an outline of the work I have done this year. I tried to meet the needs of my particular group, to prepare them for the language demands of the first grade, to help them to use purer English, to make them more fluent in the mother tongue, and to lay the foundation for better speech in life.

## *Eliminating "Me don't know—Me wants a turn—Me has a dog"*

Each child is asked by the teacher, "What is my name?" Each child answers, "It is Miss ———." If he does not know he answers, "I don't know." (It is difficult for some children to learn the teacher's name.)

At the beginning of the year the children do not know one another's names. The teacher uses the children's names as much as possible. Each child has a turn in trying to throw bean bags into a basket a few feet away. The teacher says, "Do you want a turn, Russell?" Russell answers, "I want a turn." The teacher asks each child in the same manner.

The teacher draws the outline of a house on the blackboard. The child tells who lives in his house, as, "I have a mother. I have a brother. I have a grandmother. I have a dog." The teacher sketches in the house each occupant as he is named. The class is interested in watching the picture on the blackboard grow.

Following with the idea that the children like to know about one another, the policeman game is useful. One child plays he is a policeman. Another child plays he is lost. If the policeman is to take the child home, he must know the child's name and address. The lost child cannot give up, even if he does not know the name of his street and the number of his house. He must try to describe the street and the house. The other children may try to help the policeman to guess the name and number from the description. In most cases the teacher has to supply the number, or she asks the child to look at the number on his house and to have someone tell him what it is, so that he can tell the class on the next day.

#### *A Cure for "O.K."*

The children still do not know one another's names. The teacher asks, "Avis, will you bring John to me?" Avis tries to select John as she says, "I shall bring John to you." John then has a turn, and so on.

When it is time for dismissal, the teacher asks each one in turn, "Phyllis, will you get your clothing?" Phyllis answers, "Yes, I shall get my clothing."

After washing their hands for lunch, at the beginning of the year, I handed the children the paper towels. I asked each one, "Will you dry your hands carefully, and try not to let little pieces of the towel fall on this clean floor?" Each child answered, "Yes, Miss ——."

#### *The Correction of "Lookit" Was Incidental*

If an airplane flies over the school yard, the teacher can say, "Look! Look at the airplane." During the free drawing judging period the teacher can now and then hold up a paper and say, "Look! Look at this paper. What do you think Elsa is trying to tell us?"

#### *Exterminating "Ain't"*

Call the roll. As each name is called, the child answers, "I am here." When the name of a child who is absent is called, the class says, "Joseph is not here." At other times when the roll is called and a child is named who is absent, instead of using the absent child's name the class answers, "He (she) isn't here."

One child goes out of the room. A merry-go-round is formed. Each child of the inner circle is an animal, and tells the class what animal he has decided to be. The teacher takes from a pack of animal cards the cards of the animals named. The child who has been outside the room enters, and is handed these cards. The top card may be an elephant. The child asks, "Mary, are you the elephant?" Mary answers, "No, I am not the elephant." The child asks different children this question, until the child who is the elephant answers, "Yes, I am the elephant." The child proceeds with the rest of the cards in the same way. For the end of the game the merry-go-round is, in fancy, wound, and the children ride around in the circle.

At recess "The Farmer In The Dell" is played. A four year old child cannot remember what all of the players represent. When the game is finished, the players remain in the middle of the ring. A child is chosen to ask each one who he is. "Are you the farmer, James?" "Yes, I am the farmer." The answer may be, "No, I am not the farmer." The class may be

asked to give the answer. "He *is not* the farmer," etc. The smartest child would be the one who could remember who every one was.

#### *Did for Done*

The teacher plays that she is a child. She has a small ball. She has been playing ball. She is tired, sits down, places the ball in her lap, and plays that she has fallen asleep. The other kindergartner quietly takes the ball and gives it to some child. All the children put their hands behind their backs. The first teacher wakes, looks for her ball, and says, "Fred, did you take my ball? Someone has taken it. Did you do it?" Fred answers, "No, I did not do it." ("Yes, I *did do* it.") The teacher asks various children until she finds the one who has the ball. If the teacher is a good actor, the children love this game.

#### *Conversational Aids*

There are a number of pictures. A child is asked to choose one and to tell what he can about it. The teacher must insist upon the use of sentences, and set the goal as an original story about the picture.

Children tell stories they have heard, experiences they have had, and original stories.

In games such as the "Musician," a child is chosen for a musician. He tells what instrument he is going to play, what tune, and from what place he comes. He tells us about the place from which he comes. All of the children become musicians and with the piano play the same tune and instrument.

#### *Good-Morning Instead of "Hi"*

At the Hallowe'en party a manikin doll appeared. The children named him Joe-Joe. After Joe-Joe had done a number of fascinating things, each child shook hands

with him saying, "Good-morning, Joe-Joe."

#### *Pronunciation of Yellow, Green, and Purple* (Not yellor, geen, and poiple)

Tie a yellow ribbon around Joe-Joe's neck. Ask the class, "What color is the necktie which Joe-Joe is wearing?" The class answers, "Joe-Joe is wearing a *yellow tie*." Each child in turn says, "Joe-Joe is wearing a *yellow tie*." This repetition is speedily done. The children decide which child has said the sentence (particularly the word *yellow*) most distinctly. At recess the child so designated has Joe-Joe to try to manipulate. At other times Joe-Joe wears a *green* or a *purple* tie and the drill progresses in the same manner.

A child hides. A *yellow*, *green*, or *purple* ball is tied on another child's back. Then the child who hid tries to see what colored ball is on the second child's back. The second child must try not to let him see. When the first child succeeds in seeing the ball, he calls out, "The ball is \_\_\_\_\_."

#### *Pronunciation of Skip* (Not kip)

The children are standing in a circle. Ask each one in order the following question, "Mary, can you *skip*?" Usually the child answers, "Yes, I can *skip*." Mary then has a turn to skip to music around the room. When Mary has returned to her place in the circle, the teacher asks, "Does Mary know how to *skip*?" The class answers, "Yes, Mary does know how to *skip*." (In rare cases the answer is "Mary *doesn't* know how to *skip*," showing correct use of *doesn't*.)

#### *Pronunciation of Pumpkin* (Not pun-kin)

At Hallowe'en teach the Hallowe'en song in *Folk Songs For The Little Child* by Kolsaart. Give the word *pumpkin* special attention. In this song the word

*sturdy* has, also, to be explained and drilled.

#### *Pronunciation of Chimney* (Not chimney, chiminey, chimbley)

Choose a song at Christmas time which contains the word *chimney* as does the one in the Poulsom book. Be sure that every child pronounces it correctly.

#### *Pronunciation of Window* (Not winder)

A Jack Frost song or poem will correct this mistake. The children may tell you about the pictures which they have seen that were painted on *windows* by Jack Frost.

#### *Directing Attention to Rhyme*

Have the children tell you the words sounding alike in a song or poem. At the beginning of the year they love to do this with Mother Goose. When the children are able to do this, the next step is to have them tell you other words which sound like the words that rhyme in a particular song or poem. Unless I have practically written the poem myself, I have not had original poems from my classes, nor from individuals in them. The kindergarten teacher should be careful not to use songs or poems containing defective rhymes as, for instance, *fun* and *come*.

#### *Games That Teach Correct Grammatical Forms*

"Thumbkin" is a type of game that children love, and because of repetition it insures correct enunciation and impresses the correct grammatical form. The children hide their hands behind their backs. They say, "Thumb. Thumb. Where *are* you? Where *are* you?" The children take their hands from behind their backs and hold their hands in front of them. The thumbs are standing up tall. The fingers are turned down into the palms. The children make their thumbs bow as they say, "Here *I am*. Here *I am*.

How *do you do*." Each of the four fingers has a turn in the same way. Then the children ask, "All the fingers. All the fingers. Where *are* they? Where *are* they?" All the fingers appear and the children say, "Here *they are*. Here *they are*. How *do you do*." The fingers bow. (I have changed the words of the old Thumbkin game to these which are more natural, and which would be used in conversation.)

A child said "tut" for "shut." I had him try to repeat after me "sh-ut" and so on. He made no improvement. He was confused. In order to give the children an idea of the variety of sounds, I had them say many times "coo" like the pigeons, with purity of vowel sound. I went over all the bird and animal sounds in an interesting way. Different children were dolls and were bent over to hear them say, "Ma-ma" or "Pa-pa." Tunes were sung using one syllable throughout. "Sh" was chosen as a syllable. A week later I found that the child who had said "tut" for "shut" had unconsciously corrected himself.

The kindergartner should be discriminating. Contractions are overdone. As an instance, in one song *here is* can be said instead of *here's*. *Here's* occurs ten times in this particular song. After such repetition it becomes difficult for a child ever again to think *here is*. In the universal game "I put My Two Hands In," the piano can easily make the change and have the children leave out the extra words. If these extra words were used in conversation, they would sound awkward. Therefore, say "I put my hands in," "I put my feet in," and so on.

Many songs contain grammatical errors. These errors should be corrected, or the song should not be taught. One song containing in the last line the expression *me and you* is an example.

Poetry is a good medium for infecting children with the idea of phrases and sentences. In retelling poetry the repetition is consistent and musical. The fragments are shorter than those of prose. For the kindergarten age there is not enough poetry that sets a high standard either for appreciation or example.

The children's attention is directed to speech and they can better see the importance of speaking well and accurately, if the speaker is at a distance. Often I send a child into the dressing room to say a sentence, tell a story, or recite a poem. This child learns how to speak out clearly,

and that he must speak more slowly, more consciously, and more carefully than when he is speaking conversationally. The other children find listening less of a strain. Another way of obtaining the same result is to have the children build a platform in a corner of the room.

These devices, together with the regular ones of the curriculum which I have naturally not included in this outline, have been a pleasure to use. The children speak better than those of classes I have had before I became interested in the opportunities for teaching good usage in the kindergarten.

### THE FETISH OF ENGLISH GRAMMAR

(Continued from page 88)

many of our great men spoke with any extraordinary degree of polish.

The American Revolution saw the birth of a new political system, and also that of Horace Mann to whom we owe so much in the educational field. As the leader of the revolt against what he called "meaningless terms" he may be taken as the pioneer in the movement to free English teaching from the shackles of formal grammar. Before his time there had been a mixture of a desire to standardize something which had always existed, and to nationalize it by applying it to the English language for which it had never been intended. The standardization might have been justified had there not been the stupid confusion of the scientific and mechanical, and the artistic and spiritual. Grammar as a science may well be standardized, but grammar as a means of making a boy speak "nicely" must be left free of all rules except the most obvious.

To transfer the principles and methods of Latin to the study of English merely because the nation is an English speaking one suggests a nationalism as narrow as

that of Hitler or Mussolini. It would appear much more logical to give instruction in grammar in those languages in which the stress on mechanics is a real contribution to an understanding, and let the application to English be made later in the few cases in which it will prove essential to correct speech. The earlier stages in the development of English are now past, and we have reached a point where the basis is pretty well established. Few families, save the illiterate, make enough constructional mistakes to justify a stiff course in grammar for their correction.

Perfect the agreement of subject and verb, assure the use of the nominative case in pronouns used as subject complements, clear up a few of the more confusing perfect verb forms, eliminate a half dozen colloquialisms, and you are ready to teach boys and girls to speak and write English "nicely." But this teaching will not be grammar, and it will be productive of far more that will be retained in later life than any of the dry rules contained in a modern text-book of grammar.

# To a New Teacher of Grade Four\*

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FIRST OF all, follow the adopted text as a guide. It isn't logical to teach it word for word. If the pupils do not need some parts, touch them lightly or omit them. Other parts should be stressed even to the point of giving additional exercises so the pupils can get a thorough understanding of them. If certain suggestions in the text are poor, obsolete, or stated in such a way that you can not use them successfully, substitute other easier or more up-to-date methods which will serve the purpose better and thereby improve on the book and benefit the children.

It is very important that every lesson be planned and that an interesting and definite assignment be made often at the beginning of the period. Your interest in the pupils and subject matter will have much to do with the results to be expected. Your daily English will be a stimulating example for that age of children who learn so much by unconscious imitation.

Children like to talk. Their desire to talk about things of interest to them should be utilized as the oral part of language. The more timid ones may be induced to talk if you find out their background of experiences. Some interests which are usually common to children of this age are incidents concerning their physical selves, their work, hopes, achievements, treasures; leisure, including visits, trips, and picnics; home interests, and services rendered to friends singly or in groups. Some children never tire of tell-

ing about having their teeth pulled, being ill with the measles, or how they can throw so-and-so. Others like to tell about their pets, while others will talk about toys, playhouses, or new dresses. Home experiences may include things heard over the radio or the places seen on automobile trips.

A very satisfactory method of procedure is to have two- or three-sentence talks. Carry this plan over into the written work, having the pupils construct the first and last sentences in as interesting a manner as possible. When the pupils are talking, have them stand and talk to the class. Instead of saying "Write a story about this picture" why not hold up, say, a copy of "The Horse Fair," have them count the horses, and ask, "Does this make you think of something?" One may think of a rodeo, another a pony, another some horses in a pasture, and so on. Then say "Write two sentences about something you think about." How much better to have the pupils interested and wanting to write about a particular topic! Teach them to give names to their stories.

There are many other ways of arousing interest in children. For example you may say, "Boys and girls, I want you to give me a little story of two or three sentences about what your father does for you. Let me tell you a story about what my father does for me. 'Last Saturday my father came to buy some supplies and to visit me. He said he and mother are planning to have me take Thanksgiving dinner with them. How glad I shall be to go!' Now how many are ready to tell me about what

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your father does for you?" One more way is by using literature. Read a short selection. By suitable questioning each pupil will bring to mind an incident or experience he can talk or write about.

The fourth grade is an excellent place to develop a liking for good literature. You might read some well-chosen books—and don't leave out the boys when making your selections. One device that has been successfully used is to write the names of all the pupils on a large sheet of bristol board which is tacked up in the room. When a pupil has read a book and passed a short oral test, the "book" with the name written on it is pasted after his name. This is made of a fold of bright-colored paper the back side of which is pasted to the bristol board while the other is free. How the children enjoy looking at the bright-colored "books" pasted after their names!

There are usually a few homes from which you can secure old copies of *Child Life*, *Junior Home Magazine* and other periodicals suitable for the fourth grade. You might set a certain time when pupils have the privilege of reading short poems found in these magazines or elsewhere, to the class.

There should be a bulletin board for display of various kinds of work including written language. The pupils should be encouraged to bring pictures, poems, short stories and anything of interest.

The fourth grade is the one in which formal work should be given in the dictionary. See that all pupils can repeat the alphabet in order and can start with any

letter and continue on. Pupils should learn, also, that each group of words continues in alphabetical order after the initial letter. Give quick drill on finding a word beginning with, say, "h" and other letters. Help pupils to increase their vocabularies. How about your deliberately using a word that you wish to teach them? It is well to keep a note book of all the new words and bring them to the notice of the class occasionally.

It is just as important to keep a record of misspelled words and common errors in written language. Teach the spelling words until pupils can use them correctly. The errors may be corrected by games of various kinds. For instance have pupils walk by a window to notice objects outside. Ask each pupil what he saw. Have him answer, "I saw" a tree and so on. The thirteen commonly misused verbs can be taught in this way. Names, descriptive words, and kinds of action can also be taught by games. Subjects and predicates should be taught by means of questioning.

The longest written work should be letters. Fourth grade pupils should learn to write short, friendly letters in good form. Of course you won't leave out the teaching of punctuation and capitalization in letters and other written work; the text will be a constant reminder. Copying exercises and dictation are also very valuable. If you use the nine months faithfully following the text, these suggestions, and other ideas of your own, you will surely have a group of children ready not only to be passed but to be promoted.

# Principles of Method in Elementary English Composition\*

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RESEARCH IN education has a two-fold function; it lays the foundation for the development and application of new principles, and it evaluates the efficiency of the prevailing principles and practices. In either case it is important to the teacher only to the degree that it affects classroom practice. Particularly this is true in the case of research in instructional fields such as elementary school English. In spite of the recognized importance of language as a tool skill, the influence of the results of research on teaching practice is not so great as might be expected. This may be due to the limited amount of real research evidence available, or it may be due to a failure to make effective use of the results at hand.

The purpose of this bulletin is to place before teachers and supervisors a series of specific statements of points of view and principles of classroom procedure in the teaching of elementary school English which seems to be warranted and supported by the best and most recent theoretical and experimental evidence. The principles are grouped as exactly as possible under six categories which provide the logical basis for the organization of the report: (1) modern points of view in language instruction; (2) content and grade placement of the language curriculum; (3) psychology of learning as applied to elementary English; (4) method in language teaching; (5) measurement

of results of language instruction, and (6) remedial and corrective instruction in language. While these headings are followed generally in the arrangement of the principles it is impossible to hold exactly to these lines of classification. Many of the statements blend gradually from one category into another.

The preparation of a bulletin of this type involves a number of serious difficulties. The interpretation of research as it affects instruction in elementary school English is itself a most difficult undertaking. Merely to select and secure the useful research contributions from the mass of titles is an almost hopeless task. To digest, weigh and balance these contributions requires a range of knowledge and a depth of judgment not adequately possessed by any individual or perhaps by any limited group.

Evidence is often entirely lacking, or when available is frequently inconsistent and contradictory. Furthermore, there are certain obviously important principles which appear to be more dependent upon a theory or a point of view than upon objective evidence. Yet, in spite of these dangers and difficulties there is a growing conviction on the part of many interested in the improvement of the teaching of this subject that further steps must be taken to crystallize these principles. Even the little that is really supported by research evidence should be put into concrete form and made available to the busy classroom teacher. Despite the fact that many controversial issues may be wrongly

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interpreted in the light of the available evidence, the issues will at least be raised. Where exact and conclusive evidence is lacking, a critical inference may be much better than a guess.

Unquestionably such an undertaking should not be the responsibility of one person. While this bulletin attempts to reflect the points of view and opinions of different people, it may be criticized quite legitimately as being too largely the interpretation of one individual with a somewhat limited and localized point of view and with the results of his own research program perhaps a bit too clearly in the foreground. It is hoped that it will be read and interpreted as charitably as possible with these limitations in mind.

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(To be continued)

# Editorial

## English Must Still Be Taught

**T**RENDS IN English teaching today are, in the main, liberal. This is right and proper in a modern, democratic society. But insofar as these trends are proclaimed merely in reaction to past formalism, and in a shifting from right to left for the sake of appearance at a time when such shifting is fashionable, they may be regarded with suspicion. Educators who know that they can make the headlines easily today by being startlingly "progressive," and who find such publicity sweet, easily become extreme in their statements, and untrustworthy in their leadership.

It is well enough, therefore, for thoughtful teachers, whatever their educational philosophies, to scrutinize carefully the proposals advanced in numerous articles, treatises, and books. Some of the soundest educational concepts, such as the experience curriculum in English, the integrated curriculum, the behavioristic concept of language, may be fantastically interpreted, or carried to absurd lengths.

One valid and sensible principle, especially, that of the integration of English with other subjects, and the incidental teaching of language, may prove mischievous if not clearly understood. The statement that a certain degree of form may be attained through the outflow of speech under socially evocative situations is true enough. Almost all normal human beings have numerous opportunities for this kind of language education. In the classroom, both lucidity and coherence in expression, and teaching economy and effectiveness may be gained through the integration or correlation of English with other school subjects, and with healthy social interests.

But if the English teacher stops merely with recognizing these things to be true, he admits his own superficiality. These matters are all fundamental. They are basic to effective teaching. Out of them may be developed conditions favorable to the teaching of English, but they can never be substituted for instruction in speech forms and conventions of language. If a command of form in language and power in expression can be acquired normally merely through the opening of channels of social intercourse in class rooms, then why teach English as such? That is a fair question.

The answer is, of course, that along with the socialization of the schools have come numerous problems of individual adjustment and social unfitness and indifference. And not only this; since the needs for precision and definiteness in language are increased with the growing complication of life in the modern world, English teaching grows proportionally difficult.

In view of all this, it is obvious that the conventions of speech and writing necessary to meet these exacting social needs, cannot be acquired incidentally.

Individual differences play an increasingly important role in the teaching of the language arts. What is a gift of expression with one child may be a problem of speech cultivation with another. There are not only technics to be taught, but the teacher must know what children need them, and when they are best introduced. This applies to usage, grammar, spelling, punctuation, and to forms of creative expression. The English teacher must still be occupied with formal conventions and speech patterns, however social the implications of speech may be.